

Aristotle on πρὸς ἓν

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1) *All things refer to a primary*

It seems that there is a general principle in Aristotle's philosophy that 'all things are referred to that which is primary (πάντα πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον ἀναφέρεται).' (Met.,¹ Γ, 1004a25-26) This referring relation, however, may be in a different way for each thing: 'After distinguishing the various senses of each, we must then explain by reference to what is primary in each term, saying how they are related to it; some in the sense that they possess it, others in the sense that they produce it...' (Met., Γ, 1004a28-31)

This general principle is asserted about:

- a) One: 'All things which are one are referred to the primary one.' (Met., Γ, 1004a26-27; 1005a6-7) As Aristotle always makes 'one' and 'being' close to each other subject of the same rules and attributes, he makes the subject of referring interchangeable as well: 'It makes no difference whether that which is referred to being or to unity. For even if they are not the same but different, they are convertible.' (Met., K, 1061a15-18)
- b) The same. (Met., Γ, 1004a27)
- c) The contraries. (Met., Γ, 1004a28)

¹ Abbreviations used in this paper:

EEt.	<i>Eudemian Ethics</i>
Met.	<i>Metaphysics</i>
PrA.	<i>Prior Analytics</i>

d) Being, healthy and medical: It is a crucial thesis of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* that being (τὸ ὄν) is said in referring to a primary being, that is substance. And to do this, he repeatedly takes 'healthy' and 'medical' as examples:

'There are many ways in which a thing is said 'being' but they are referred to some one and unitary nature (πρὸς ἓν καὶ μίαν τινὰ φύσιν) but not homonymously. Everything which is healthy is related to health, one thing in the sense that it preserves health, another in the sense that it produces it, another in the sense that it is a symptom of health, another because it is capable of it. And that which is medical is relative to the medical art, one thing in the sense that it possesses it, another in the sense that it is naturally adopted to it, another in the sense that it is a function of medical art. So, too, there are many senses in which a thing is said to be, but all refer to one starting point; some things are said to be because they are substances, others because they are affections of substances, others because they are a process towards substances, or destructions or privations ...' (Met., Γ, 1003a33-b10; cf. K, 1060b36-1061a6; Z, 1030b2-3) Thus, all of the categories refer to the primary being, i.e. substance because 'it is in virtue of the formation of substance that the others are said to be quantity and quality and the like; for all will be found to contain the formula of substance.' (Met., Θ, 1045b27-30) Also, Aristotle speaks of becoming of all things referring to one common: 'Everything that is may become referring to some one common nature.' (Met., K, 1061a10-11)

e) Contraries: all contraries refer to the primary differences and contraries: 'Since everything that is may become referring to some one common nature, each of the contraries also may become referring to primary differences and contraries of being, whether the first differences of being are plurality any unity or likeness and unlikeness, or some other differences.' (Met., K, 1061a10-15; cf Met., K, 1061b11-15; Met., Γ, 1005a6-8)

f) Potentialities: 'All potentialities that conform to the same type are starting points, and are called potentialities in reference to one primary kind. (Met., Θ, 1046a9-14)

g) Soul and body refer to the same thing. (Met., H, 1043a35-37)

2) *Referral unity versus universal unity*

Aristotle distinguishes referral ($\pi\rho\delta\varsigma \ \acute{\epsilon}\nu$) unity from the unity that is found in universal, which is the same in all of its instances: ‘If being or unity is not a universal and the same in every instance ... the unity is in some cases that of referring to one ($\pi\rho\delta\varsigma \ \acute{\epsilon}\nu$), in some cases that of serial succession.’ (Met., Γ, 1005a8-11) Thus, we can say that the unity present in *pros hen* must be distinguished from the unity that is found in the instances of a universal: while in all of these instances the universal is the same, in those that are one by referring to the one, there is nothing which is the same in all. Aristotle says this also by using ‘based on one’ ($\kappa\alpha\theta’ \ \acute{\epsilon}\nu$) and common: while in one the instances are one ‘based on one’ thing, they are one in the other by referring to one: ‘For not only in the case of things that are said based on one there is knowledge investigating one subject, but also in case of things that are said referring to one nature.’ Nonetheless, Aristotle thinks that ‘referring to one’ unity is somehow kind of ‘based on one’ unity: ‘For even that [i.e. being said ‘referring to one’] is a kind of being said based on one.’ (Met., Γ, 1003b12-15)

In *Nicomachean Ethics* (1096b23-9) Aristotle opposes being derived from one thing to referring to one thing: ‘In what sense are different things called good? ... Is it because they are all derivative of a single thing ($\acute{\alpha}\phi’ \ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma \ \acute{\epsilon}\iota\upsilon\alpha\iota$), or [i.e. equivalently] because they are all derived towards a single thing ($\pi\rho\delta\varsigma \ \acute{\epsilon}\nu \ \sigma\upsilon\nu\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\iota\upsilon$) ...?’ (See: EEt., H2, 1236a15-23)

3) *Pros hen and one science for things not under one genus*

It is a general rule in Aristotle’s philosophy that only things that are under one and the same genus can be studied by one and the same science. The discovery of *pros hen* helps him regard those which are not under one genus but refer to one thing capable of being studied in one science: ‘For a term belongs to different sciences not if it has different senses, but if its definitions neither are identical nor can be referred to one central meaning.’ (Met., Γ, 1004a24-25) In fact, it is by *pros hen* theory that Aristotle resolves the difficulty of one science for being qua being: ‘Since all that is said to be based on one and common thing

(καθ' ἓν καὶ κοινὸν) though the term has many meanings, ... and things of this sort can fall under one science, the difficulty we stated at the beginning is resolved, - I mean the question how there can be one science of things which are many and different in genus.' (Met., K, 1061b11-17)

4) *Relation as referring*

At least in one place Aristotle speaks of the relations in syllogism using πρὸς: 'For the syllogism in general is made out of premisses and a syllogism referring to this out of premisses with the same reference, and a syllogism relating this to that proceeds through premisses which relate this to that (ὁ δὲ πρὸς τόδε συλλογισμὸς ἐκ τῶν πρὸς τόδε προτάσεων, ὁ δὲ τοῦδε πρὸς τόδε διὰ τῶν τοῦδε πρὸς τόδε πρὸς τόδε προτάσεων).' (PrA., A, 23, 40b40-41a4-7; cf. 41a7-13)